

and to the last are making a heroic attempt to keep together. Soon they will be completely worn out and discarded and the wearer will likely follow them.

Big foaming "schooners," together with steaming bowls of soup, are placed before the men who are in a position to pay, by active and swift-footed waiters. At the long bar next-appearing bartenders dispense drinks to the thirsty customers.

The conversation is general and the topics under discussion are varied, but generally center upon the last job or the prospects of getting another, or shipments of men to construction work by employment agents. Sometimes experiences with the police are related. The listeners then pay strict attention to the story.

Men are coming in and going out and their slouchy gait and the chafing of their feet tell a tale of crushed ambition and departing hope. Some, who are evidently hungry, cast, animal-like, longing eyes toward the bar and the corner where the free lunch is stored. They wish for those things but the wish cannot be gratified without the necessary nickel, and the precious nickel which would put them in possession of the "good things" is not to be found in the empty pockets. These are the "dead ones," the free lunch spotters. They are also the "detectives" of the free lunch counter, and for the price of one drink will give the man who seeks information on the subject the name and location of the saloon where the biggest "schooner" and lunch can be gotten. They are also experts in the art of getting at the lunch counter without buying a beer. They have reduced it to a science. As a rule they are professional bums.

"One up, special, a plate of lunch for a live wire, one stew for a bum," come a chorus of discordant notes from the waiters. This does not in the least disturb the habitués of the place.

A combination composed of smells

from the kitchen, stale beer and the various brands of tobacco smoked form a stench that grips you at the throat. This particular smell cannot be properly described, but is enough to give a person who is not accustomed to such places something akin to an attack of vertigo.

The faces of the men do not as a rule have the contented, joyful expression of those who, being blessed with better conditions, can afford to patronize a higher grade of thirst emporium. With the exception of the gibberings and idiotic laugh of those in an advanced stage of intoxication, the rest of the men appear to be plunged into an ocean of gloom. That look of despair and God-forsaken expression is plainly noticeable. It is the badge of the Army of Despair. Behind it the great tragedy of the life of the wretched creatures is hidden. It would take the pen and imagination of a Victor Hugo to describe it.

(Next—"Penny Soup Kitchens.")

A PREDICAMENT



"What's the trouble, Mr. Giraffe?"

"Why—tee, hee—I'm locked in and can't get out. Would you assist me by opening the door with the key?"

"Certainly! Where is the key?"

"In my trousers pocket."